

PROPERTY CRIME TOTAL

DEFINITION

Property crime includes the offenses of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. The object of the theft-type offenses is the taking of money or property, but there is no force or threat of force against the victims. Arson is included since it involves the destruction of property; its victims may be subjected to force.

TREND

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of offenses¹</i>	<i>Rate per 100,000 inhabitants¹</i>
1997	11,558,475	4,318.7
1998	10,944,590	4,049.1
Percent change	-5.3	-6.2

¹Does not include arson. See page 63.

In 1998, an estimated 11 million property crime offenses were reported to law enforcement agencies nationwide, down approximately 600,000 offenses from the 1997 total and representing a decline of 5 percent. Five- and 10-year trends indicate the 1998 volume was 10 percent lower than in 1994 and 13 percent lower than the 1989 level.

The South, the most populous region in the country, comprised 40 percent of all reported property crimes in 1998. The Western States accounted for 24 percent of the total; the Midwestern States, 22 percent; and the Northeastern States, 14 percent.

From 1997 to 1998, all four regions of the country reported decreases in the number of property crimes. A 7-percent drop was recorded in both the Northeast and the West, and a 4-percent decrease was noted in both the Midwest and the South. (See Table 4.)

Property crime fell 6 percent in the Nation's cities collectively from 1997 to 1998. Cities with populations of 250,000 to 999,999 and those with 25,000 to 99,999 inhabitants registered the greatest decrease, 7 percent. The suburban counties experienced a 6-percent decline, and the rural counties, a decline of 5 percent. (See Table 12.)

A comparison of 1998 property crimes by month indicates that the largest number occurred in August, while the fewest occurred in February.

Table 2.25

Property Crime Total by Month

Percent distribution, 1994-1998

Months	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
January	7.6	8.1	8.0	8.2	8.6
February	7.0	7.2	7.6	7.3	7.5
March	8.2	8.2	7.9	8.0	8.2
April	8.0	7.8	8.0	8.0	8.1
May	8.4	8.4	8.5	8.4	8.4
June	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.4	8.5
July	9.1	9.0	9.2	9.1	8.9
August	9.3	9.3	9.1	9.0	9.0
September	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.5	8.4
October	8.7	8.8	8.7	8.8	8.5
November	8.2	8.2	7.9	8.0	7.8
December	8.5	8.1	8.3	8.3	8.1

Rate

The 1998 property crime rate was an estimated 4,049 property crimes per 100,000 inhabitants, down 6 percent from the 1997 rate. Regarding 5- and 10-year trends, the 1998 rate fell 13 percent below the 1994 rate and 20 percent below the 1989 rate.

Compared to property crime rates of 1997, those of 1998 declined in all four regions of the country: 8 percent in the West, 7 percent in the Northeast, 6 percent in the South, and

5 percent in the Midwest. Corresponding property crime rates include 4,286 per 100,000 inhabitants in the Western Region, 2,973 in the Northeastern Region, 4,590 in the Southern Region, and 3,885 in the Midwestern Region.

By population group, cities with populations from 250,000 to 499,999 registered the highest property crime rate, 6,849 per 100,000 inhabitants. The property crime rate in cities outside metropolitan areas was 4,543 per 100,000 inhabitants; in metropolitan areas, 4,345; and in rural counties, 1,771. (See Tables 2 and 16.)

Nature

The total dollar value of property stolen in connection with property crimes in 1998 was estimated at over \$15.4 billion. The average loss per offense in 1998 was \$1,407, slightly higher than the \$1,314 recorded as the average loss in 1997.

Considering the percent distribution of all property crimes in 1998, larceny-theft accounted for the highest amount at a little more than 67 percent. Burglary comprised just over 21 percent of property crimes, while motor vehicle theft accounted for the remaining percentage. Based on detailed arson data provided by 11,377 law enforcement agencies, 66,508 arson offenses were reported in 1998. The average dollar loss of property damaged due to reported arsons was \$12,561.

Law Enforcement Response

Property crimes generally have lower clearance rates than violent crimes, and in 1998, the property crime clearance rate was 17 percent as compared to the 49 percent clearance rate for violent crime. Regionally, property crime clearance rates were measured at 19 percent in the Northeast, 18 percent in the South, and 16 percent in both the Midwest and West. (See Table 26.)

Juveniles only (persons under age 18) were involved in 21 percent of the property crimes cleared by law enforcement nationwide. Proportionately, juvenile clearances registered at 22 percent in cities, 20 percent in suburban counties, and 18 percent in rural counties. (See Table 28.)

In 1998, law enforcement officers made an estimated 1,805,600 arrests for property crimes, which accounted for 12 percent of total arrests. When measured against previous years' figures, the 1998 arrest total for property crime was 8 percent lower than the 1997 total, 14 percent less than the 1994 figure, and 19 percent below the 1989 number. Nationwide, juvenile arrests dropped 11 percent compared to 1997 totals, and adult arrests for property crimes decreased 6 percent. (See Tables 32, 34, and 36.)

Seventy-one percent of all persons arrested for property crimes in 1998 were males. Sixty-five percent of the arrestees were white, and 67 percent were over the age of 18.

Figure 2.11

Property Crime

Percent Change from 1994

